



# pinkdrink

**Women and alcohol: a project by  
the Department of Pathological Addictions AV3  
ASUR MARCHE**

Expo Milano 2015 – *WE-Women for Expo*

Italian Pavilion



## Credits

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Provincia  
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### **Pink Drink at Expo 2015. Why?**

Pink Drink is a prevention project against alcohol abuse. It has been promoted by the Health Service dealing with pathological dependences.

But it is more than that.

It is a women addressed project in relation with food, health and well-being in general. It considers women as part of a society that gives them more and more possibilities but, at the same time, set them before new responsibilities and risks.

## ● **Foreword**

“A free woman is the exact opposite of a fickle woman”, Simone de Beauvoir, 1982. In our everyday life, if a woman gives expression to her independence or claims a role for herself within the society she will often meet prejudices and stereotypes, regardless of any social change!

For example, we have found out that girls living in the provinces of the Marches judge with severity a woman who drinks alone seeing it as a disreputable behavior, even if they drink alcohol in such a way and so much that it is considered at risk to themselves. Moreover, some exponents of the scientific community interpret female drinking as a simple emulation of male behavior.

Nowadays, drinking alcohol is neither improper nor transgressive for a woman. On condition that she does it fully aware that alcohol doesn't give women equal opportunity. Freedom must become synonymous with responsibility. First of all, being responsible to yourself, to your child, if you are pregnant or you have just given birth to a baby, to your own relations, because alcohol must not become a mask behind which you can hide your shyness. As a mask drops down sooner or later. This is the message behind the “Pink Drink” project.

It consists of all the initiatives undertaken by the Department of Pathological Addictions (DDP) especially those ones concerning the association of women and alcohol.

The idea came about in 2010 from the following analysis: the Local Pathological Addictions Treatment Center (SERT) of Macerata recorded a high number of alcohol-dependent women in treatment with much higher percentages than the regional and national average. Why? And above all, did a real “female problem” in the matter of alcohol abuse exist on our territory in connection with the above mentioned high incidence of women asking for medical help?

European and national surveys showed an ever-increasing alcohol consumption by women, especially girls between 18 and 24 years. This is the same target group that has been involved for over a decade in the DDP interventions and several initiatives organized by a selected welfare workers team ([www.stammibene.info](http://www.stammibene.info)). We have taken into account the campaigns carried out in Italy and women and alcohol related studies. In our opinion, the scientific validity of the analyzed phenomena championed a reductive and demeaning idea based on the theory of convergence. Its defense is that the improving use of drugs among women is an indicator of a greater quota of equality (increased consumption of alcohol and other psychoactive substances is only a consequence).

Therefore, it was not only relevant but also necessary to examine how gender and alcohol interact in order to enhance our understanding of the social changes that influence drinking patterns, thus providing the basis for effective interventions.

We started carrying out a research (page 22) within several shopping centers of the backcountry where we interviewed girls aged between 18 and 24 years. We came to the conclusion that their alcohol consumption was comparable to the Northern European model, so far away from the Mediterranean one and our farming habits and traditions.

Being aware that drinking is a social fact and prohibitionism has never been effective, we have started a process of education aimed at responsible and moderate drinking involving other stakeholders in the project. In collaboration with the Azienda Speciale EX.IT of the Chamber of Commerce of Macerata, we organized two events for the whole citizenry: "Health! Women, Food and Lifestyles" and "Health! Women, Sport and Lifestyles" (page 26). We also carried out the "Drinking Aware" project that involved more than 1,400 students all over the Province (page 28). The activities and the spirit in which they were conceived led to the recognition of "Pink Drink" as a flagship in the assignation of pink labels by the National Observatory on Women's Health (ONDa) to the Hospital of Macerata. "Pink Drink" was awarded by the Italian Pavilion and WE - women for EXPO at EXPO Milano 2015 among other "Projects for women". We hope it's just the beginning of a new story.



## ● Pink Drink – The research

### ∴ The idea

In 2010 the local and national data indicated an increasing consumption of alcohol by women and especially young women. Examining in depth this topic, reflecting on its causes and consequences, as well as on the implementation of preventative interventions, has been the starting point of a thorough research on this issue.

### ∴ Scientific literature on women and alcohol

We carefully examined what researchers wrote about this subject, considering the following perspectives:

- epidemiological (consumption data)
- societal (evolution in time of gender issues studies)
- health ( how alcohol can differently affect a woman compared with a man's health )
- prevention (projects on alcohol programs, gender oriented campaigns and preventative interventions)

### ∴ Field study

Then we defined target (girls between 18 and 24 years), methodology (survey) and sample size (at least 370 units).

The established questionnaire, validated through a pilot study, in its final version included questions on the following areas: respondents socio-demographic characteristics, consumption habits, individual perceptions of drinking, friends behavior, knowledge. The shopping centers on our territory have been chosen as a place for the questionnaire administration: this was not a random choice but it was based on the conviction that a "neutral" space would guarantee greater accuracy of the outcomes as these places are frequented by heterogeneous subjects, for social extraction, age and cultural level. They are also

different from other places where young people gather (e.g. nightclubs) that would have twisted the final results.

### ∴ Questionnaires

We carried out our survey over ten missions in five provincial shopping centers. 370 questionnaires were collected. At the same time as the administration of the questionnaires, an information and prevention activity was held in the stand "Pink Drink" by the DDP Stammibene team workers who distributed educational material and dedicated gadgets.

### ∴ The publication

Collection, processing and analysis of data were completed in June 2012. This led to the publication of "Pink Drink", in December 2012. It was produced and printed in 1,000 copies and reprinted for Expo 2015.

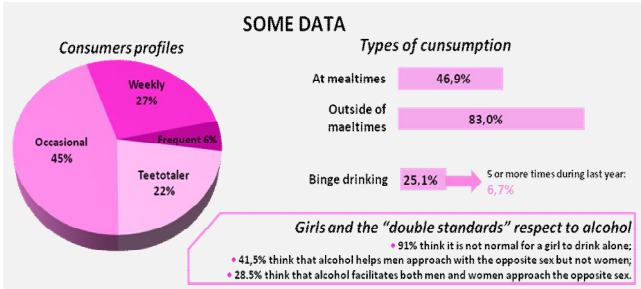
The book deals with the phenomenon of female drinking both from a social point of view (drink for sociability reasons and the "double standards" mechanism that commonly considers inappropriate for women what is socially accepted for men) and health perspective (physical consequences of alcoholism are more severe for women than for men).



### ∴ Results

Results show that girls in our area, compared to their peers in our country, have higher values for alcohol consumption outside of mealtimes and more episodes of binge drinking; on the other

hand they have lowest values for daily consumption associated with meals. Therefore, they seem markedly adhere to the Northern European model (sporadic consumption; drinking takes place outside of mealtimes; despite a limited overall quantity of alcohol having been assumed, shots of liquor and/or cocktails, there are symptoms of excess consumption) at the expense of the Mediterranean model (more regular alcohol consumption, usually wine, associated with meals). In fact, a food-related and quality-conscious consumption together with a refined drinking is almost completely absent. Drinking is often viewed as an acceptable way to have fun, "cut loose" and gain social acceptance. While the girls themselves largely adhere to what we called "double standards", their attitudes toward women's alcohol consumption and drinking behaviors will become more accepting if they are included in drinking rituals encoded by the peer group.



With regard to prevention, the main indications exclude prohibitionist and penalty approaches, they rather focus on overcoming prejudices of "double standards", planning "gender oriented" intervention measures (using targeted marketing techniques) and educating to aware and responsible drinking (also through the re-appreciation of our local traditions and typical products in collaboration with stakeholders).



### ..: Diffusion and collaboration with stakeholders

The province and the municipality of Macerata have collaborated in the promotion and diffusion of the initiative by sponsoring the project. EX.IT, Azienda Speciale of the Chamber of Commerce of Macerata, made available the spaces of the Civica Enoteca Maceratese for the presentation of the publication on December 21, 2012. A second presentation, directed to health professionals, was held in the Library of the Hospital of Macerata on January 22, 2013.

Making a similar event at a wine shop could be considered a provocation, but in reality it was a well-considered choice: we considered crucial the involvement and cooperation of stakeholders in the "profit" world (represented by the Chamber of Commerce and Italian Sommelier Association) to educate the younger generation to the enhancement of the quality products of the territory and the support of a culture of responsibility and awareness with respect to consumption.



## ● “Health!” events

### ∴ The idea

The Azienda Speciale EX.IT helped organizing a series of meetings called "Health": a journey of raising awareness and exchange on the topic of women's health, especially the younger ones, in relation to the changes that are taking place in lifestyles and consumption and that “Pink Drink” research has detected. The events were then directed to the entire population, but with particular attention to its female component. This is because woman is a "sensitive receiver" of these changes and, at the same time, the guardian of the family lifestyle.

### ∴ How the events were organized

Both initiatives "Health! Women, food and lifestyles" (February 27, 2013) and "Health! Women, sports and lifestyles" (March 27, 2013) were held at the Civica Enoteca Maceratese. Round tables were set up with the participation of health workers, food and wine entrepreneurs, exponents of institutions and sport representatives. Referring to different perspectives they have offered insights into the critical role that women can play in the promotion of health, including through the exploitation of land resources.

### ∴ Spokeswomen

The following testimonials have offered their professional and personal contributions: Silvia Agnani (sociologist at the Pathological Addictions Department AV3), Iginia Carducci (chef at the restaurant "Osteria dei Fiori"), Jacqueline Cesaretti (General Practitioner), Simona De Introna (dietitian at the Hygiene Food and Nutrition Service AV3), Marta Gambella (softball champion), Ines Laubbichler (professional sommelier), Stefania Monteverde (councilor and teacher), Mirella Staffolani (pediatrician at the

Mother and Child Department AV3), Orietta Maria Varnelli (Varnelli Distillery owner) and two young girls who attended the first level of the Italian Sommelier Association course.

*Salute!*

*"Salute! Donne, alimentazione e stili di vita"*  
Mercoledì 27 FEBBRAIO 2013  
ore 18.30

*"Salute! Donne, sport e stili di vita"*  
Mercoledì 27 MARZO 2013  
ore 18.30

a cura del  
Dipartimento delle Dipendenze Patologiche  
di Macerata e Camerino  
in collaborazione con  
Ea-It - Azienda Speciale Camera di Commercio di Macerata

c/o Civica Enoteca Maceratese  
Corso della Repubblica, 51 - Macerata



## ● “Drinking Aware” project

### ∴ The idea

Following the “Pink Drink” research directions and the aim of promoting awareness on the subject of alcohol, the Azienda Speciale EX.IT and the DDP have devised an intervention destined to young people that would allow to:

- talk about the overflowing of Northern European consumption model
- highlight the effect on health and the riskiness of drinking outside of mealtimes;
- show the implied social mechanisms lying beneath the increasing alcohol consumption and abuse;
- take a hard look at the phenomena of binge drinking and the weekend rituals with which they are linked;
- enhance the Mediterranean sobriety and quality oriented model.

In twelfth grade classes there were the most suitable target audience for our project: here you find both underage and of age students.

### ∴ Methodology for action

We contacted all the high schools in the province of Macerata and we have developed a structured intervention:

- ✓ initial presentation of the project;
- ✓ administration of the test "The wise drinker" regarding consumption, perceptions and knowledge about alcohol;
- ✓ lesson on alcohol (history, risks, moderate consumption and abuse, alcohol and relationships) with projection of videos and slides;
- ✓ administration of the re-test one month after.

The Azienda Speciale EX.IT funded the interventions, the DDP coordinated them and they were achieved thanks to the experience of a selected team of psychologists (Valeria Cegna, Irene Pagnanelli, Alfredo Rapanelli, Erica Serroni).

### ∴ Numbers

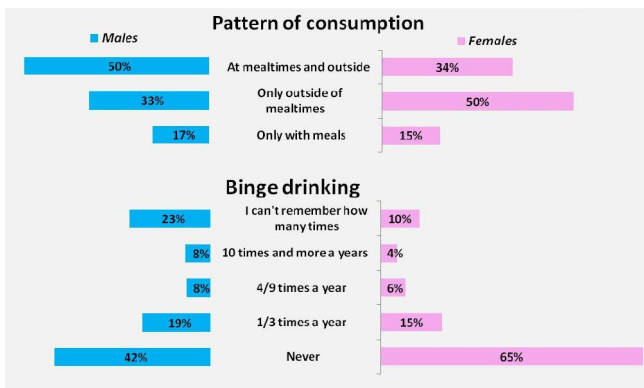
- 16 high schools in 28 locations
- 82 classes
- 1,460 students, average age 17 years (we have reached 25% of 17 year olds living in the province!)
- 41 interventions
- 2,695 filled out questionnaires.

### ∴ Results

We have collected the results of the project in a small publication we presented to the public and the local press on May 16, 2014 at the Civica Enoteca Maceratese and on October 26, 2014 at the Municipal Library of Macerata in the festival "Macerata per Bacco".

The principal data concern the significant and worrying spread of the Northern European consumption model and the practice of binge drinking among young people and the simultaneous lack of knowledge of the Mediterranean model and the risks associated with alcohol. The collected data are even more alarming when you consider that more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the students who completed the test were minors. Although males declare consumption more than females, even among females values are quite high, even higher than those recorded in the Pink Drink research, in fact:

- more than 1 in 4 consumes alcohol at least weekly;
- about 35% have been drunk at least once in the last year;
- half of female consumers drinks only outside of mealtimes, against one third of males;
- 7.4% (and 6% of males) declares to have replaced the meal with alcoholic beverages.



As we recorded in Pink Drink, girls largely adhere to what we called "double standards" while their male peers seem to make not much of it.

With regard to the educational content, the comparison between test and re-test has proved a good effectiveness of the prevention intervention.



## ● Women at work!

Five years after the beginning of this process, one of the things that continues to amaze us is the fact that some of the most important issues on women-health remain unknown or little considered not only by ordinary people but by health workers; for this reason we have identified two areas of intervention:

∴ **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) prevention**, is a permanent pattern of physical and mental defects that can develop in a fetus in association with alcohol consumption during gestation; it is 100% preventable simply not consuming alcohol during pregnancy.



It is estimated that FAS and other disorders that are part of FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) have a comparable incidence to Down syndrome. There is no known safe amount of alcohol or safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy since

even moderate amounts are able to cause significant alterations. Our priority right now is to get this message to the widest possible number of women. A match-book is the first of the instruments we have thought about for the purpose.

∴ **Drug addict women life stories collection**; we believe it is necessary to introduce the gender study in the addictions treatment together with prevention: to make this possible we have decided to use some of the instruments of qualitative research. They can explain the complexity of all those issues and events characterizing the personal journey of these women, leading the way for a kind of narrative epidemiology.